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Prices Oversight Commission
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HOBART 7001

1-5-2000

I have read about your draft report on the pricing policies of Metro and you support for a fare increase. I write to strongly oppose this proposal as it will only result in a further decline in use of public transport when what the Hobart area desperately needs is greater use of public transport and a reduction on reliance on private cars. Once you lose people to cars, you lose them for good - and if you increase the fares, patronage will decline even further.

I consciously made a decision not to own a car and to use public transport. I have seen the Lenah Valley bus service decline over the years to the extent that we have to cadge lifts, get taxis, cycle or walk after 6 pm on weekdays or at weekends when the service is a disgrace. There are only two buses after 7.30 pm on weekdays except Fridays, they stop altogether at 7.10 pm on a Saturday and on Sundays there are only 4 buses all day. Tonight I had to leave a meeting early to catch the bus or wait an hour for the next one as just one example and with all my daughter's evening events, it becomes quite impossible as I can't leave her hanging around in the dark for a bus.

If you increase the fares, services will decline even further as Metro makes further cuts. The State Government needs to make a bold decision to reverse this cycle of decline by a radical new approach to public transport which inevitably will involve subsidies - but which in the wider context will make sense.

At the moment, I realise that 70% of users are on concession tickets and that most full fare users only go in the rush hour. On the other hand, evening services are underused because they are so infrequent - how can you go to the cinema and then have to wait 2 hours for a bus? What are teenagers supposed to do after 7 pm on a Saturday night? How can you get to church on a Sunday morning? Current policies almost force you to get a car if you can afford one and once you have a car, you don't use the bus - except maybe in the rush hour.

I have friends in Hobart who have never been on a bus and whose children have never been on a bus. You have to attract them back onto the buses, not put the fares up again!

Concession users will be hardest hit by the GST already without fares going up as they do not get a tax rebate but have to pay more on everything they purchase.

I hope that there will be a radical rethink on public transport in Hobart rather than a continuation of the cycle of fare increases and less usage if the fares do go up, this will be the inevitable result. The government needs to think how to reverse the decline, not how to perpetuate it.

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